



Cherry Parker's December Newsletter

Here in New Zealand something draws us to the sea. Whether to look at it comfortably from the shore, to sail on it watching others doing the same in every size of craft imaginable or to head to the favourite fishing spot to sit patiently waiting for the biggest bite.

Every summer we flock to our special coastal spot to do not a lot for several weeks. We gaze at the sea from our tent, caravan or holiday home and enjoy watching others swim, paddle, sail, surf and sun themselves, until we pluck up the energy to do one of these ourselves.

Or not.

It is summer so it doesn't matter. There will be another sunny summery day tomorrow.

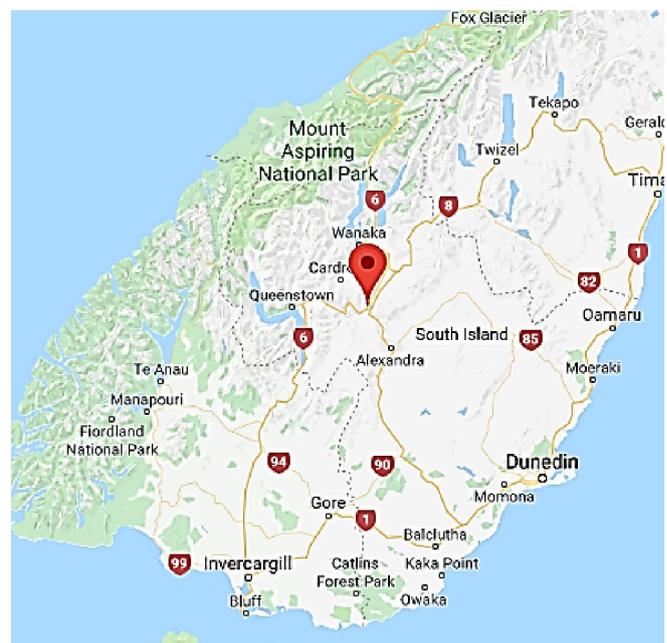
The pohutukawa tree heralds the beginning of summer and the bright crimson flowers means long hot lazy days are not far away. Do a road trip around the top of the east coast of the North Island in the weeks just before Christmas. It is a great way to see the abundance of unspoilt coastline with masses of pohutukawa trees in flower at the height of the season. The flowers only last a few weeks but stitched ones last longer!



The Pohutukawa Flowers pattern below is very quick to complete as the design mostly consists of long stitches and very few cross stitches.

An interesting fact in keeping with the theme of being close to the sea.

The town of Cromwell in the South Island is New Zealand's furthest inland point. It is only 119.44 kilometres (74.22 miles) from the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean. Who knew?



Pohutukawa Pillow

Stitch Count: 40sts wide x 27sts high

Fabric: 25 count White Lugana

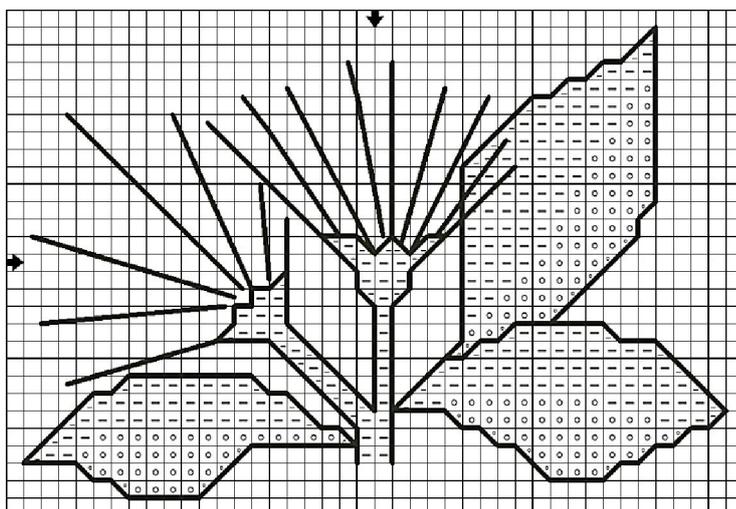
DMC Threads:

ss	498	Christmas Red
o	3345	Hunter Green
c	3346	Hunter Green light

The design is cross stitched with two strands of thread over two strands of fabric.

Back stitch the flowers, leaves and stems with one strand of 3345. Straight stitch the flowers with two strands of 498 using the base lines as a guide and filling them in until you have a thick flower.

Iron a piece of iron-on vilene to the back of the stitching and cut out approximately five stitches away from the design. Iron in place on the felt using a pressing cloth or slip stitch in place. Cut a second piece of felt to make your small pillow. Join together with a running stitch stuffing before completing the last side.



We have had the Orcas and Dolphins and now for the Whales.
CraftCo who are kitting the designs were a little taken aback by a red and grey whale and asked why I did that. I happen to like red – that's why!
As you can see from the photo they have other colours to choose from.
Available now in my shop <http://CherryParkerDesigns.etsy.com>



A friend makes Christmas puddings for weeks before Christmas to give away.
Little and large - all made in the slow cooker.
Here is the recipe if there is someone you know who could do with a pudding.
Or maybe one for yourself to nibble away at.....just because you can.



Christmas Pudding in a slow cooker (with thanks to Alison Holst)

500-600gms mixed Christmas fruit
¼ C sherry, rum or orange juice
125gms butter, melted
finely grated rind of 1 large orange
one large egg
extra liquid if necessary

2 cups plain flour
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp ground cloves
½ cup brown sugar
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp mixed spice

Method

Find a heatproof bowl which will hold 4 – 5 cups and make sure it will fit in your slow cooker. Grease the bowl and line with microwave-proof cling film.

Use whatever dried and /or crystallised fruit you like. You can add crystallised pineapple and ginger, dried cranberries, raisins, currants and apricots.

Chop these with kitchen scissors into pieces no bigger than dried cranberries and put them in a heavy plastic bag. You can do this a short time ahead or a few days is best. Add the liquid/s of your choice to the bag, then close the bag, leaving a small air hole, and microwave everything for about 5 minutes, until all the fruit is hot, plump and shiny. The liquid will soak into the fruit as it cools. Turn the bag over occasionally during this time. Cool the bag of mixture to room temperature before using it.

Turn a 2 litre or larger slow cooker on to HIGH with 1-2 cups of hot water in it.

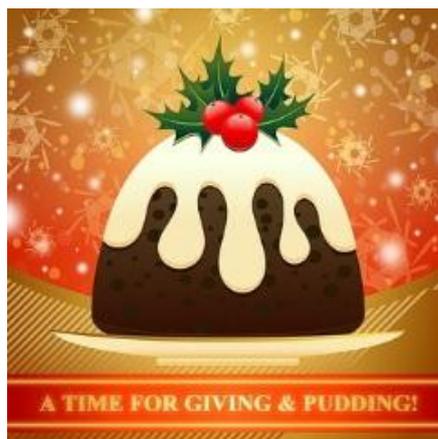
Mix together the six dry ingredients in a large bowl. Melt the butter in a small bowl, then add the grated orange rind. Beat in the eggs with a fork, then tip it into the flour mixture, stirring until no dry flour remains. Add the cool soaked fruit and mix everything gently but thoroughly. The mixture should be wet enough to drop from your spoon. If it isn't, add more liquid, using a little of several liquids rather than just one. (Refrigerated marinated fruit may require up to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of extra liquid)

Spoon the mixture into the prepared pudding bowl, levelling the top. Cover with foil, fold the edges down over the bowl. Lower the pudding bowl into the slow cooker bowl and put on the lid. Cook on HIGH for 8 –12 hours. Turn out while warm since puddings are less likely to stick to the container at this stage, then wrap and cool completely.

Serve with brandy butter, custard or whipped cream. They can be refrigerated for six weeks or be frozen. Thaw before reheating, still in the film, in the sprayed, covered bowl. Reheat in the slow cooker set to HIGH, with water around the bowl, for 4 – 5 hours, or on LOW for twice this time.

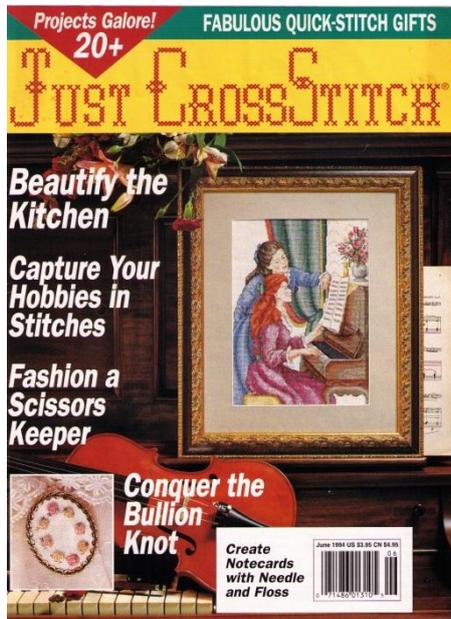
VARIATION: If preferred, cook the pudding in several smaller containers like cups, each covered with foil, with lid on and enough simmering water to reach about half way up the sides of the containers, for 4 –5 hours depending on their size. Stand each bowl on a rack, preserving jar ring, or crumpled foil during cooking, and check at intervals to make sure that pot does not boil dry.

NB: Whatever you do, don't leave out the orange rind. If you have an inefficient grater use the rind of two oranges for best flavour.



Last century I had my first cross stitch design published in the US magazine Just CrossStitch. In those far off days computers were not the norm and all the graph symbols were drawn by hand. I subscribed to the magazine, by mailing a form to them and the magazine got shipped out to New Zealand weeks after it was available in the US.

Today I get the same magazine in digital form the day it is released in the US and I submit my designs on-line. The magazine's own stitchers usually work the patterns but if I do the design myself, the completed project is the only thing that physically gets sent. How times change!



The design of hands stitching was that first pattern. That is where the journey began.

Other patterns of mine have been published over the years by the same magazine which is still going strong. Six issues are published annually with one special Christmas issue. About 70 designs are chosen to become part of this much awaited edition each year which is often ordered 12 months ahead, by keen shop owners and cross stitchers.

I was asked this year to submit a design for the 2019 edition. No pressure! It has to be complete and must arrive in the US by 19th January 2019 to be published Oct/Nov 2019.

You can have two hints as to what the design may be! Christmas is all about the children and the joy they get from the mystery and the anticipation of the season. And the year 1823.

Free designs

For those new to the newsletter, previous newsletters are on my website with little bits of news and free patterns each month. If you have a moment to yourselves over the Christmas break take a look at <https://www.cherryparker.co.nz/newsletter>



Each year families and friends change. Sometimes growing, sometimes diminishing, but forever changing. However we will celebrate the season, whether with families of our own or people we have gathered into our lives along the way, plan to keep it simple, move the rules to make your day happier and less stressful.

Boxing Day

Boxing Day is a laid back let's do anything we want, eat what we want, kind of a day. Wonderful left overs, pavlova for breakfast (well why not?) cold chicken and more left overs whenever we feel like it during the day.

Why can't Christmas Day be like this?

Try and blot out the commercial lead up to the festive season, enjoy Christmas Day and keep your focus on Boxing Day when everyone really relaxes, meets up lazily with friends and enjoys time spent doing what comes easiest.

And remember Christmas calories don't count.

A break from the newsletter for January, but in February I will be back on board with preparations underway for two new books.

One is a completely new direction from stitching but one that has been a lot of fun and a big learning curve. The other - you guessed it Cross Stitch book number 8.

Enjoy the season and happy stitching

Cherry

www.cherryparker.co.nz

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